

MEMORANDUM

October 26, 1952

TO: Mr. Nelson C. Jackson, Director
Community Services

FROM: Roy E. Morris
Field Representative

SUBJ: Meeting of Selected Negro Leaders, on Bucks County-Philadelphia, Pa.
October 23, 1952.

Purpose of Visit:

In order to secure the largest number of affidavits from persons who could be encouraged to apply for Levittown or Fairless Hills houses, I went to Philadelphia -

1. To speak to and otherwise seek the activation of top Negroes representing various business and civic organizations.
2. To plan further with Mr. Charles Ford, Executive Director, District #7, United Steelworkers Union of America, CIO, regarding my stimulation of a CIO-Bucks County anti-housing discrimination program.
3. To confer again with Mr. Victor Adler, Regional Director, HHFA, as he requested on October 10th.

Background of Visit:

This trip was a follow-up of the NUL-UCDS visit I made to Philadelphia October 6-10, 1952. One of the four purposes of that trip was to locate applicants for purchase and/or rental of Levittown or Fairless Hills houses. The Armstrong Association (the Philadelphia Urban League affiliate) offered to set up a meeting of selected Negro leadership through and with whom our objectives might be reached best. (See report, "Philadelphia Field Visit, October 6-10, 1952.")

Problems Presented:

While the NUL's immediate interest is to secure affidavits, the size of Philadelphia and the need for mobilizing the help of its citizens

both demanded intermediate steps. Furthermore, my visit brought the Armstrong Association to sharp attention, with recognition of the advisability of a well coordinated local-national effort regarding problems in a contiguous geographical area.

Despite the concern about racial problems in Bucks County being transmitted to the Philadelphia Community Chest and to the Health and Welfare Council of Philadelphia and Vicinity, practically none was recognized among Negro Philadelphians. The problem, then, was seen as mobilization of their interest and help, with proper channelling for our present need of affidavits and future work (including cooperation with other agencies) regarding skilled Negro workers for strategic jobs in Bucks County plants.

Action Taken:

Armstrong Association Meeting -

I met with a group of nine outstanding Negro citizens, with the staff of the Armstrong Association present and participating. The meeting was at 3:30 Thursday, October 23rd, at the Armstrong Association office. Fraternal, business, religious, and social welfare organizations were represented.

For about 15 minutes I described the total Bucks County situation. Emphasis was placed on race-related housing and employment problems. I concluded with the following questions:

1. "Do you consider these problems important to you, to Philadelphia Negroes as a group and for Philadelphians at large?"
2. "If so, what are you going to do about them?"

Discussion was deliberate. Many questions were asked of me, and for some twenty minutes the first question I asked the group was being answered affirmatively. The next hour and a half were consumed with a discussion of local resources and how they can be made effective.

One fraternal organization representative stated that he felt that a \$50,000 educational fund of his organization could be tapped for certain of our purposes. Quite a bit of discussion was on a suggestion that a petition with 100,000 names of white and Negro Philadelphia and Bucks County residents be presented to all agencies and officials having any official responsibility towards Levittown and Fairless Hills. The petitions would demand appropriate action to eliminate present racial policies at Levittown and Fairless Hills. The petitions would be followed up by personal efforts of the six Negro state Congressmen and civic organizations.

The final decision was to call an enlarged meeting to be held a few days after the November 4th election. At this meeting representation is to be secured also from labor and veterans groups and all reputable forces that can help. The Elks Hall was offered as a meeting place. The group insisted that I address this larger audience.

CIO Activition -

A conference with Mr. Charles Ford, Executive Director, USW-CIO, disclosed that he had moved already regarding my suggestions during my last trip. The Bristol mine plant local was sending two Negro members to Levittown and to Fairless Hills to try and arrange for purchases of houses. However, the idea of the human relations program I suggested that the local launch, raised some questions of machinery. To clear those questions I was asked to return shortly after the November 4th election to meet with all local union officials to be called in by Mr. Ford, with a plan to throw the full weight of District #7, United Steelworkers of America, CIO, behind the effort.

Regarding my request that Trenton local union member applicants for Levittown and Fairless Hills houses be located, Mr. Ford placed the idea before a CIO area meeting in Trenton. An official of the UAW-CIO, in from Detroit, asked that that proposal be tabled. Instead, UAW now plans to raise the money for a plan of its own.

Regional NNWA office discussion -

Mr. Victor Adler, Regional Director, NNWA, despite his understanding that Mr. Frank Horne (FMA-Washington office) would visit his office in time for my visit, Mr. Horne did not show up. (However, I found that there had been no written or other definite commitment as to Mr. Horne's visit.)

Even greater interest than on my last visit was showed about possible Negro sponsors for private housing developments. In addition, he should like to be notified of any Negroes whose attempt to get FMA and/or other federal housing aids, have not met with success seemingly because of race. He feels that with close contact and clearance of information we might be able to find some presently undisclosed aid that the federal housing agencies can give toward open-occupancy housing patterns in Bucks County.

Conclusions and Recommendations:

The meeting of Negro leaders had all the earmarks of success. Nevertheless, the test will come in what actually results. Persons present were only half those invited; regrets were received from all the others. The consensus of the meeting apparently was that substantial community awareness could be developed, alerting Negroes (especially those who might be seeking jobs in Bucks County) to look to the question of housing there now, applying for housing and following up their job and housing interests with organizations able to help.

The following recommendations are made:

1. By correspondence, plans for the enlarged meeting in Philadelphia should be carried forward, and the NUL-UCDS field representative should attend that meeting as urged.
2. Mr. Ford should be notified of the date of the visit for that meeting in time to arrange his meeting of local CIO (Bucks County-Philadelphia-Trenton) officials, and that the NUL-UCDS field representative attend Mr. Ford's meeting.

Names of Persons Contacted:

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